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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3277
INFO ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 000267

DEPT FOR NEA/IAI

E.O. 12958: 01/08/06
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: AFTERMATH OF HAMAS' YAHYA AYYASH'S ASSASSINATION

REF: TEL AVIV 240 (NOTAL),

[¶1.](#) CLASSIFIED BY DCM
JAMES LAROCO FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

GOI REACTION

[¶1.](#) (U) ALL MEDIA BANNERED THE CELLPHONE KILLING OF YAHYA AYYASH. THE PRESS GREETED AYYASH'S DEATH WITH STATEMENTS SUCH AS "ACCOUNT SETTLED.", "GOOD RIDDANCE", AND AN EYE FOR AN EYE." "THE ELIMINATION OF AYYASH...OFFERS THE PRIME MINISTER MEANINGFUL DIVIDENDS IN THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL FRONT. THE PRESS TAKES IT FOR GRANTED THAT ISRAEL WAS BEHIND THE KILLING. FOR ITS PART, JERUSALEM HAS REFRAINED FROM ANY OFFICIAL COMMENT.

[¶2.](#) (U) PUBLIC SECURITY MINISTER MOSHE SHAHAL TOLD IDF RADIO JANUARY 7 THAT HE BELIEVES IT IS IN THE PA'S INTEREST THAT THERE BE QUIET AND STABILITY IN THE PROCESS AND THAT THE TEST OF THE PA'S BECOMING A POLITICAL FRAMEWORK LIES IN ITS ABILITY TO IMPOSE LAW AND ORDER. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS ABOUT WHETHER THE PA COOPERATED IN THE KILLING, SHAHAL SAID: "...THE PALESTINIANS...SHARE AN INTEREST IN ELIMINATING TERROR.... IT IS ONLY NATURAL THAT SECURITY ELEMENTS SHOULD COOPERATE AND EXCHANGE INFORMATION."

[¶3.](#) (U) ARAB MK'S CONDEMNED THE ASSASSINATION. SHAYKH ABDULLAH NIMR DARWISH, HEAD OF THE ISLAMIC MOVEMENT IN ISRAEL, CALLED THE KILLING A BLATANT VIOLATION OF THE PEACE ACCORDS, WHILE HADASH MK HASHEM MOHAMMAD CRITICIZED THE OPERATION SAYING "HE IS IN PRINCIPLE AGAINST ASSASSINATIONS NO MATTER WHAT THE VIEWS OF THE PERSON KILLED. WE NEED TO CONSIDER WHERE IT WILL LEAD US."

PA REACTION

[¶4.](#) (U) ARAFAT SPOKESMAN NABIL ABU RUDEINA STRONGLY CONDEMNED THE KILLING. THE ISRAELI PRESS QUOTES A SENIOR PA OFFICIAL AS SAYING THE ASSASSINATION EMBARRASSED ARAFAT AND THAT THE PA WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE EFFECTS ON THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS, AND THE PROSPECTS OF HAMAS RETALIATING.

[¶5.](#) (U) MAJOR GENERAL ABDUL RAZZAQ AL MUJAYIDAH, FROM THE PA NATIONAL SECURITY FORCES, SAID THE PA STARTED AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ASSASSINATION. AS OF JANUARY 7, FIVE GAZANS HAD BEEN ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH THE KILLING. ACCORDING TO AN OFFICIAL IN PA POLICE COMMANDER NASIR YUSIF'S OFFICE, SECURITY FORCES ARE ON HIGHER ALERT.

HAMAS REACTION

[¶6.](#) (U) IN ADDITION TO CALLING FOR REVENGE, HAMAS HAS ACCUSED THE PA OF COLLUDING WITH THE GOI IN THE ASSASSINATION. HAMAS SPOKESMAN MAHMOUD ZAHAR HAS DENIED THAT OSAMA HAMMAD, "A SON OF HAMAS", (REPORTED

TO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED WITH THE ASSASSINATION) WAS A SUSPECT IN CONNECTION WITH THE KILLING, OR THAT HAMMAD HAD FLED GAZA.

ON THE GROUND

¶17. (U) IN THE AFTERMATH OF HAMAS' CALL FOR REVENGE AGAINST ISRAEL FOR THE ASSASSINATION OF YAHYA AYYASH (THE ENGINEER), THE GOI HAS DECLARED ALL AREAS TRANSFERRED TO PALESTINIAN CONTROL CLOSED MILITARY AREAS INDEFINITELY. ISRAEL T.V. REPORTED JANUARY 6 THAT THE CLOSURE WAS EXPECTED TO LAST UNTIL JANUARY 10 AT LEAST.

¶18. (C) ACCORDING TO MATAK (THE OLD CIVAD), GAZANS CAN COME INTO GAZA, ISRAELIS CAN LEAVE GAZA, AND THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS CAN MOVE BACK AND FORTH. EMBOFF SAW THESE MOVEMENTS IN ADDITION TO:

-- VIP'S WITH MAGNETIC CARDS CAN GET IN AND OUT OF GAZA. VIPS WITH PAPER PASSES, WAITING FOR THE PERMANENT MAGNETIC CARDS CANNOT.

-- GOING TO THE RIDICULOUS, THERE ARE FIFTY GAZAN TRUCKS WHICH, HAVING BEEN INSPECTED AND CLEARED BY THE ISRAELIS, REMAIN ON THE ISRAELI SIDE OF THE BORDER. UNFORTUNATELY, THE DRIVERS OF THE TRUCKS CANNOT GET TO THEM BECAUSE THE DRIVERS DO NOT HAVE MAGNETIC CARDS. ALTHOUGH SOME DRIVERS HAVE OFFERED TO SUBMIT TO A STRIP-SEARCH SO THAT THEY CAN GET TO WORK, THE IDF HAS REMAINED ADAMANT THAT THEY CANNOT LEAVE GAZA.

-- THESE "STERILE" TRUCKS WERE PART OF A GOI INITIATIVE, IMPLEMENTED UNDER U.S. ENCOURAGEMENT, TO REDUCE THE IMPACT OF CLOSURE ON GAZA'S ECONOMY. THE TRUCKS, ONCE CLEARED BY THE ISRAELI SECURITY, WERE TO BE FREE TO TRAVEL BETWEEN GAZAN-ISRAELI DESTINATIONS WITHOUT RE-ENTERING GAZA.

-- TRUCK CONVOYS FROM GAZA TO ISRAEL CONTINUED WITHOUT INTERRUPTION IN SPITE OF THE CLOSURE. QARNI BACK-TO-BACK TRADE ALSO CONTINUED.

¶19. (C) CAMPAIGNING FOR THE JANUARY ELECTIONS WAS SUSPENDED FOR TWO DAYS, BUT RESUMED IN A "LOW PROFILE" WAY ACCORDING TO THE DEPUTY HEAD OF THE CENTRAL ELECTION COMMISSION IN GAZA. HE ECHOED OTHER PALESTINIAN INTERLOCUTORS WHO CALLED THE TIMING OF THE ASSASSINATION "ATROCIOUS" FOR ELECTIONS. HE DID NOT HOWEVER, BELIEVE IT WOULD HAVE A LONG-TERM ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE ELECTIONS--OTHER THAN TO INCREASE THE SYMPATHY VOTE FOR HAMAS AFFILIATED CANDIDATES.

¶10. (C) IN SPITE OF A THREE-DAY NATIONAL MOURNING PERIOD CALLED BY HAMAS, BUSINESSES IN GAZA REMAINED OPENED. THE PA ATTORNEY GENERAL SAID THAT "ONLY THE PA COULD CALL FOR A NATIONAL STRIKE" AND AS PALESTINIANS ARE NO LONGER WAGING THE INTIFADA, SUCH A RESPONSE WOULD BE "INAPPROPRIATE."

¶11. (C) HAMAS HAS COME UNDER CRITICISM FOR PROVIDING LAX SECURITY FOR AYYASH. ABU ALI SHAHEEN, A LEADER OF THE SHABEBA (INTIFADA YOUTH) MOVEMENT (PROTECT) TOLD US THAT GAZANS WERE CRITICIZING HAMAS FOR NOT PROTECTING AYYASH WELL ENOUGH. HE ADDED THAT SOME WERE EVEN SPECULATING THAT SOME HAMAS MEMBERS COLLUDED IN HIS KILLING BECAUSE AYYASH REMAINED A STAUNCH OPPONENT TO THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS.

COMMENT

¶12. (C) BASED ON OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH PALESTINIAN ELECTION WATCHERS IN GAZA, WE BELIEVE THAT THE ASSASSINATION WILL NOT HAVE LONG-TERM EFFECTS ON THE

UPCOMING ELECTIONS, THE TIMING OF HAMAS' RESPONSE,
HOWEVER, MAY WELL HAVE.

INDYK